



**Testimony for Energy & Water Appropriations Sub-Committee hearing:
“Funding Coastal Infrastructure at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers”
May 3, 2017**

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Executive Summary:

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) supports proactive federal investment in our nation’s beaches, dunes, and wetlands. Natural coastal infrastructure protects 50% of the U.S. population who live in coastal counties from storms and sea level rise; it supports the economy of coastal communities and our nation as whole; and it sustains healthy coastlines for people and the environment. Investing upfront in our natural coastal resources saves money in rebuilding upland infrastructure after storms. To meet long-term funding needs, ASBPA believes Congress should invest \$5 billion over 10 years in beaches, dunes, and wetlands as part of a national infrastructure package, but for annual energy and water appropriations in the FY18 budget we respectfully request you include the following:

- 1) Provide at least \$75 million in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Civil Works (USACE-CW) construction account for shore protection.***
- 2) Provide \$5 million for implementation of Beneficial Use of Dredged Material (BUDM) pilot program authorized in Water Infrastructure for the Nation’s Improvement (WIIN) Act (Sec. 1122) – this should most likely go to the USACE-CW Continuing Authorities Project, Section 204.***
- 3) Increase USACE-CW Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Remaining Item, “Regional Sediment Management (RSM),” from \$1.8 million to \$7.8 million to assess sediment***

availability and coastal resilience on the South Atlantic coast, which will be critical to the South Atlantic Coastal Study authorized in the WIIN Act (Sec.1204).

4) Maintain or increase funding levels for coastal data collection including:

- a. ***O&M item, “Coastal Data Information Program (CDIP),” at the FY15 & FY16 amount of \$5.4 million;***
- b. ***O&M item, “National Coastal Mapping Program,” at the FY16 amount of \$6.8 million;***
- c. ***Investigations item, “Coastal Field Data Collection Program,” at the FY16 amount of \$1 million.***

Testimony

Founded in 1926, ASBPA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that advocates for **healthy coastlines** by promoting the integration of science, policies and actions that maintain, protect and enhance the coasts of America. We represent the nation’s coastal practitioners: our members are the industry, local government officials, and academics who build, restore, maintain, and study our nation’s coastlines.

Natural coastal infrastructure, in the form of beaches, dunes, and wetlands, protect communities from coastal flooding – saving lives, protecting property, and reducing the disruption to the local economy from coastal storms. Wide beaches and high vegetated dunes protect upland property and infrastructure from storm-driven waves and flooding. Strong coastal infrastructure means local businesses are still in business after a storm, and coastal residents can return to their homes quickly and with fewer repairs. Coastal restoration also creates and supports a tremendous number of jobs. Studies of estuarine restoration – from the Gulf of Maine to the Chesapeake to North Carolina – consistently show that for every \$1 million invested, approximately 30 jobs are created or protected¹.

Beaches, dunes, and wetlands are, simply put, wise fiscal investments. Proactively investing in coastal infrastructure will save the federal government money by reducing post-disaster recovery costs. One estimate says federal investment in shore protection saved \$1.9 billion in

¹ http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/pdf/RAE_Restoration_Jobs.pdf

damages during Hurricane Sandy². With a \$65 billion recovery price tag, imagine how much we could have saved if we'd invested a fraction of that money to update our coastal infrastructure before the storm rather than after.

While the nation needs a massive coastal infrastructure upgrade, annual appropriations ensure our most basic coastal protection is maintained. Many federal agencies have a role to play in safeguarding coastal communities, but none more so than the Corps of Engineers. USACE coastal projects, hurricane- and storm-damage risk-reduction projects, and related coastal resilience studies are the cornerstone of the federal government's role in protecting and promoting coastal resilience. Key to these projects' success is a strategic plan for proper management of sediment, which is a finite and valuable resource, and up-to-date coastal data. ASBPA supports appropriations for all three of these important elements (project construction, planning and studies, and data collection) in the following programs:

1. Provide at least \$75 million in USACE-CW construction account for shore protection

Coastal shoreline counties contribute \$6.9 trillion to our GDP³. Coastal habitats -- including beaches, wetlands, mangroves and estuarine systems -- are some of the most ecologically productive and economically important on earth⁴. But, perhaps most important to communities along a coast, **a healthy coastline provides protection of life and property from the hazards of living by the water** – storm surge, waves, and sea level rise.

With this in mind, we ask you to **support the USACE's shore protection initiatives in the FY18 budget**. While the administration's budget has consistently left shore protection (coastal flood risk management) unfunded, Congress has reliably added funding for this critical USACE mission. After steady declines in shore protection appropriations -- \$75 million in FY14, \$45 million in FY15, and \$40 million in FY16 – we were pleased to see a proposed increase to \$50 million in FY17 Energy & Water appropriations legislation. However, with our nation's coastal communities increasingly vulnerable to severe coastal storms and the inevitability of the next major hurricane, we ask that you return shore protection funding levels to at least that of FY14.

²<http://www.nad.usace.army.mil/Portals/40/docs/ComprehensiveStudy/Estimate%20of%20Sandy%20damages%20avoided.pdf>

³ NOAA, State of the Coast, 2012. <http://stateofthecoast.noaa.gov/>

⁴ Barbier, Et al, "The value of estuarine and coastal ecosystem services", Ecological Monographs, 2011. <http://www.esajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1890/10-1510.1>

The current USACE capacity for shore protection construction is \$165 million, which was requested in a “Dear Colleague Letter” led by Reps. Lois Frankel and Debbie Wasserman Schulz and supported by ASBPA. The requested \$75 million is less than half of what USACE could accomplish, and should be the minimum appropriated. **Please provide at least \$75 million in USACE-CW construction account for shore protection.**

2. Provide \$5 million for implementation of BUDM pilot program authorized in WIIN Act (Sec. 1122)

The WIIN Act established a pilot program for the beneficial use of dredged sediment without the USACE being constrained by the Federal Standard. The placement of dredged sand and sediment on beaches, dunes, and coastal wetlands can serve multiple benefits, including flood and storm risk reduction, ecological restoration, and adaptation to sea level rise. As sediment sources for beach, dune, and wetlands restoration become increasingly scarce, managing sediment as a resource is essential for the USACE to achieve its multiple missions. This pilot program requires the USACE to choose 10 project areas to beneficially use sediment with a federal cost-share (rather than have the beneficial placement paid for entirely by local sponsors). ASBPA has heard that USACE districts have submitted more than 100 projects to be considered for this program, so clearly the interest is there. What the program lacks is funding.

ASBPA is encouraging the USACE to use innovative budgeting to implement some pilot projects through cost-savings by combining projects. In other words, USACE districts should jointly budget multiple projects across navigation, flood risk, and ecosystem restoration in order to create efficiencies and cost-savings while removing sediment from where it isn’t wanted (in a navigation channel) and placing it where it is (a beach or marsh). However, this will not always be possible and the cost-savings won’t always cover the entire cost of the federal contribution to the project. So **we request \$5 million for the full implementation of the BUDM pilot program.**

3. Increase USACE-CW (O&M) Remaining Item, “Regional Sediment Management (RSM),” from \$1.8 million to \$7.8 million, to assess sediment use and availability and coastal resilience in the South Atlantic division.

The WIIN Act authorized a South Atlantic Coastal Study (Sec. 1204), which is a comprehensive study to proactively address the flood risks of vulnerable coastal populations within the South

Atlantic Division (North Carolina to Mississippi). The study would address coastal risk management, coastal resilience, and sustainability, and be modeled closely after the North Atlantic Comprehensive Coastal Study (NACCS) (implemented after Hurricane Sandy) with extensive leveraging of lessons learned, tools, and process applied. The goal of the South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS) is to identify the risks to and vulnerabilities of South Atlantic coastal areas and opportunities to enhance resiliency and lower risks to population centers, economic development, and environmental resources.

The full cost of the study is estimated at \$10 million-14 million, but an initial federal investment of \$6 million would allow parts of the study that were previously authorized and do not need a federal cost-share to begin in earnest. This will also provide usable tools and metrics for coastal communities. **The quickest and most efficient way to begin working on the SACS is to increase the RSM Program by \$6 million.**

4. Maintain funding for coastal data collection including: “Coastal Data Information Program (CDIP),” “National Coastal Mapping Program,” and “Coastal Field Data Collection Program”

The CDIP maintains wave buoys on the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts that provide data such as wave height, direction and sea surface temperatures. The Coastal Mapping Program is essential to measure shoreline change across the nation. Coastal Field Data Collection supports the work of the USACE Field Research Facility in Duck, NC, which provides coastal data and research support to all federal agencies. This data is critical to engineering coastal projects, and can provide essential information about long-term coastal trends.

ASBPA is grateful to your subcommittees and Congress for making sure the critical missions of the USACE, in particular that of coastal flood risk reduction and shore protection, are funded.

Of course, shore protection, RSM, and long-term data collection are only a few small pieces of a much larger investment in preparing our coastal communities for increasingly intense and frequent coastal storms and hazards. Improving the resilience of coastal communities will take coordination across multiple federal agencies working together with state and local authorities. It will also take a large-scale dedicated investment in coastal infrastructure. However, a good first step in protecting coastal communities is ensuring shore protection, regional sediment management, and coastal data acquisition are appropriately funded.